

## **ACQUISITION CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM POLICY**

**1. PURPOSE.** This policy outlines the implementation, operation, and administration of the Acquisition Career Experience (ACE) Program. It establishes general requirements for selection to and participation in the program.

### **2. REFERENCES.**

a. Title 10, United States Code, Chapter 87, Defense Acquisition Workforce, Section 1701-1764, Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) of 1990.

b. DoDD 5000.52, Defense Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development Program.

c. DoD 5000.52-M, Acquisition Career Development Program.

d. DoDI 5000.58, Defense Acquisition Workforce.

e. AR 70-1, Army Acquisition Policy.

f. DA Pam 70-3, Army Acquisition Procedures.

g. OPM Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Volume 1, Parts 1 to 699, revised as of January 1, 2001.

h. Qualification Standards Handbook, Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Student Trainee Positions.

### **3. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.**

a. The Director of Acquisition Support Center (ASC) is charged with the responsibility for the implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). Enacted in 1990, the purpose is to improve the effectiveness of the military and civilian acquisition workforce through enhanced education, training and career development, thereby improving the acquisition process. In order to develop future acquisition leaders who have the requisite knowledge, skills and leadership abilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Army, the Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM), Headquarters Department of the Army

and Headquarters U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC) augmented the Army Intern Program by establishing the ACE Program.

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b. The ACE Program is intended to recruit full-time, undergraduate, sophomore and junior college students into civilian acquisition workforce positions throughout the Army. Additionally, the goal is to give the students a realistic job preview and encourage them to consider the Department of the Army as a career choice after graduation. During the program, students will work with mentors to learn acquisition related issues and challenges. The ACE Program is a cost-effective opportunity to infuse new ideas into Government programs and processes, while training our leaders of tomorrow.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES.**

a. The ACE Program is a comprehensive career development program designed to develop future acquisition leaders who have the requisite knowledge, skills and leadership abilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by introducing college students into the Army's civilian Acquisition and Technology Workforce (A&TWF). This program will allow the Army Acquisition Corps to integrate highly competitive, motivated, educated and well-trained individuals into the acquisition workforce.

b. The program is intended to recruit and retain college students in their sophomore year through graduation. Entry level into the program normally begins at the GS-04 level. However, if a student does not meet the GS-04 requirements entry must be at the GS-03 level. Second year students may be eligible to be promoted to the GS-05 level once they have satisfied promotion requirements. Completion from the ACE Program occurs when the ACE student has successfully completed all collegiate degree requirements and has completed, at a minimum, 640 work hours in the program.

**5. ELIGIBILITY.** To be eligible, students must be full-time, undergraduate, sophomore or junior students enrolled in academic disciplines that underpin acquisition career fields, specifically technology and business. Students must be in good standing at an accredited academic institution, must be a United States citizen at the time of application, and be able to obtain a security clearance (if required by position/duty location).

#### **6. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

a. Deputy Director, Acquisition Career Management (DDACM), and the Acquisition Support Center (ASC): The DDACM and the ASC are responsible for central oversight of the ACE Program, which will be implemented regionally.

b. Participating Organizations: Participating organizations will identify potential job opportunities within their respective organizations and work with the ASC's Regional Customer Support Office to support the ACE Program. The participating organization is

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responsible for appointing a mentor, generally the first-line supervisor, who provides day-to-day supervision and management of the ACE student. If the assigned mentor is not the first-line supervisor of the ACE student, the mentor should coordinate assignments with the first-line supervisor. Participating organizations are also responsible for coordinating all personnel related actions for positions that they fund.

c. Regional Customer Support Offices: The Regional Customer Support Offices (CSO) are responsible for recruiting and implementing the ACE Program within their regions. Regional Directors are responsible for coordinating and conducting the central selection board, which is rotated through the Regions. Regional CSOs are also responsible for coordinating all related personnel actions for positions that are ASC funded and facilitating the program.

d. Civilian Personnel Office: Local Civilian Personnel Operation Centers (CPOCs), or Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers (CPACs), are responsible for qualifying/ confirming eligibility of students; coding in Modern Defense Civilian Personnel Data System; executing appropriate personnel actions; making official job offers; sending job offer letters and pre-employment packages; and conducting first day in-processing.

e. Mentor:

(1) Mentoring is voluntary. Mentors must be members of the Acquisition & Technology Workforce (A&TWF) and be at least a GS-13 (or Broad Band Level [BBL] equivalent) or military equivalent. Mentors must also be Corps Eligible or a member of the Army Acquisition Corps. Mentors should have the dedication to not only share their time with the student, but their knowledge as well. Mentors are required to attend a mentoring workshop that is conducted prior to the arrival of students, and an end of summer wrap-up session.

(2) Mentors are responsible for the student's on-the-job training, assigning tasks, tracking hours worked, guiding, advising, and sharing insight as well as

lessons learned. They are responsible for the day-to-day supervision and management of the ACE student. Mentors are also responsible for keeping the Regional Director apprised of progress, concerns, period of time worked, etc. The mentor must develop a Student Support Form within the first week of duty, which details the student's significant duties, responsibilities, and performance objectives. Mentors must also complete a Student Evaluation Form five days prior to the student's departure. Both forms are forwarded to the ASC Regional Customer Support Office.

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f. ACE Students: ACE students are expected to perform at the highest level possible. Upon completion of the program, ACE students are encouraged to seek developmental and/or career opportunities within the Department of the Army.

## **7. RESOURCES.**

### **a. Funding:**

(1) ASC Funded Positions: The ASC will centrally fund the wages for a limited number of student positions each year. Funding requirements will be reviewed and adjusted annually. Budget estimates are calculated based upon the assumption that first year participants will meet the requirements to be hired at the GS-04, Step 01 level, and second year students at GS-05, Step 01. The Resource Management Division of the ASC will administer and manage the resources for these positions.

(2) Participating Organization Funded Positions: Participating organizations that volunteer to fund ACE students are responsible for budgeting, administering, and managing all resources associated with the ACE positions.

b. Leave and Insurance Benefits: Students will accrue annual and sick leave for their time worked. Students are eligible for both health and life insurance coverage as long as they are expected to be employed under this appointment authority for at least one year and are expected to be in a pay status for at least one third of the total period of time from the date of initial appointment to the date of completion of the program.

c. Training, Travel and Awards: Training, travel, and awards for ACE students will be funded by the host organization to which the ACE student is

assigned, unless coordinated and approved in advance by the ASC. If a host organization is unable to fund a training/travel request, they can submit a request and justification to the ASC. The ASC will review requests for funding on a case-by-case basis.

d. Recruitment: Travel of ASC employees, registration fees, and other costs associated with recruiting for the ACE Program will be funded by the ASC.

e. Relocation, Housing, and Parking: The Government will not pay to relocate students as part of the ACE Program. If a student accepts a position in a geographical location that requires relocating, they are responsible for all moving and housing expenses. All parking and/or transportation costs will be at the student's own expense.

f. Tuition Assistance: Participants of the ACE Program are not eligible for tuition assistance as part of their employment.

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## **8. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION.**

a. ACE students may work in the same agency with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship, and the relative is not in a position to influence the student's appointment, employment, promotion or advancement.

b. Performance appraisals can be used as documentation to support both positive and negative consequences of a student's performance. If the student is a documented poor performer, he/she may not be invited back for a second year or offered continued employment at the conclusion of the ACE Program. Students, regardless of how long they have participated in the ACE Program, generally have no procedural or appeal rights if separated for poor performance or conduct. There are two exceptions to this general rule:

(1) A preference eligible student who has completed one year of current continuous service in the same or similar position(s), is entitled to the procedural rights by part 432, (unacceptable performance) or part 752 (misconduct) of Title 5, CFR. The student has the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

(2) A non-preference eligible student who has completed one year of current continuous employment in the same or similar positions(s) is entitled to procedural rights, but not the appeal rights of part 432.

**9. PROGRAM COMPLETION.** Successful completion of the ACE Program entails achievement of the goals as identified in each student's Support Form and documented in their final evaluation, and successful completion of 640 work hours (verified by a CPOC/CPAC representative). If all of these requirements are met, and if positions are available, the student could be non-competitively placed into an Army intern program. Students who complete the program are also better equipped to apply for competitive positions for which the CPOC/CPAC has determined the ACE student is qualified. If Army internship positions are available, the ACE student must accept conversion to the Army internship program within 120 days after degree completion. To be considered for a contracting position, the student must also possess 24 semester hours of business related courses.

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**10. EFFECTIVE DATE AND IMPLEMENTATION.** This policy is effective immediately. The DDACM will issue procedures as necessary to issue this directive.

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